

Annual report 2024/25

We had a positive year at Business Northwest. Whilst economic times remained challenging there is some hope on the horizon with interest rates starting to decline (albeit slowly). The political climate has been very stressful with Tasmania having a second election within 15 months which had quite an impact on business as caretaker period endured for a lot longer than anticipated. Post election, we have a parliament that seems to understand that the people want stability, and business craves it in these tough times. Interestingly former federal member Gavin Pearce has moved into state politics providing a fourth Liberal for our electorate and Anne Urquhart has successfully moved from the Senate to the House of Representatives – I congratulate both on their achievements.



After a period of relative inactivity, Burnie is on the edge of a growth spurt. There are several development projects underway or at least close to happening – the new courthouse, a Woolworths supermarket, a new hotel at Camdale and several smaller state government projects including the Clean Energy Centre of Excellence at the TasTAFE campus.

Adding to that is the recent announcement of MarinusLink proceeding at Heybridge which will create many construction jobs over the next few years and once completed will help attract new businesses to the region whilst also providing the state with energy security for the future. Additionally, the NWTDT transmission project is expected to be finalised in coming months.



The recent announcement by e-fuel manufacturer HIF Global of its intent to locate on the old APPM site at South Burne is great news as not only is it a large construction project it will provide up to 200 full time ongoing jobs. This is a world leading project which will put Burnie on the map for innovation in renewables. Burnie is the centre for the renewables industry

in the region with windfarms planned for Robbins Island, Hellyer, Guildford plus an enormous development at Whaleback Ridge.

We are working closely with all project proponents plus the Cradle Coast Authority to ensure we can adequately house the incoming workforce so we do not create issues for local renters.

These many projects have taken a lot of advocacy work by us over several years, and it is pleasing to see so much activity in the area that will have a resultant flow on to the general community by way of increased employment and population growth.

The local economy needs a boost as the last few years have been tough with high interest rates and increasingly onerous payments for energy, insurance, wages and on-costs such as superannuation and workers comp. Unfortunately, like many regional centres, we have seen the exit of several chain stores due to the collapse of *Mosaic Brands*; we lost Rivers, Katies, Millers, Rockmans and Autograph plus Jeanswest in early 2025. Whilst not having big workforces, the stores were large and leave gaping holes in our CBD; plus, it creates a negative sentiment among locals who are largely a very negative lot.

The Council is planning to refresh the CBD and has received \$17m from the state government to do this. BNW is heavily involved in this activity with Des Hodgetts as Chair and myself on the committee. The first action involves a revamp of the beachfront area, which should commence later this year, and involves removing the rail line and adding better play equipment.

Another activity we have is a plan to hold a large Christmas raffle to try to attract shoppers back into the CBD for their festive shopping. The drawing of the raffle will coincide with the end of the Christmas Parade.

Our financial position remains strong and possibly overstated as we have funds committed to projects such as the Christmas raffle and a new tourist map named *Cool*

Places, which is due for release in coming months. We are also planning for a membership drive next month using some of our sponsorship revenue from 7BU/SeaFM.

We had Warren Moore of Braddon Business Centre conduct a strategic review of BNW and he has provided an interim report to us which the executive is working through – it will be finalized and actions will be taken by the incoming executive. Part of the review highlighted the need for a succession plan and we are actively working on that. We need a stronger focus on tourism so have commissioned West by North West to create a strategy paper for tourism in the Burnie area. We expect that to be finalised this year, and the formation of a dedicated tourism group closely tied to BNW and BCC will be formed to execute to the plan.



During the year we provided support for the *Permission to Trespass* event and the initial *Illuminate the Coast* festival, both of which were hugely successful, and we plan to extend the *Illuminate* event to Burnie next year including a projection workshop with a well-recognised artist.

Our in-house-developed *Cradle Tickets* site has continued to perform well and hosted most of the events that made up the two tourism festivals plus our own events. We have recently been awarded a grant for \$10,000 to further develop the application so it can be sold to other chambers and organisations to provide an ongoing revenue stream.



Recently we mourned the passing of a legend of our group. Allan Leeson OAM was made a Life Member of the Burnie Chamber of Commerce & Industry in 2017, was a proud Rotarian and authored many books relating to the sporting groups of the region and his beloved Cooe. He was a passionate Burnie man and a driving force in getting cruise ships to visit Burnie. He is sorely missed.

Our events have been quite successful again this year with a number of breakfasts plus some evening events supported by TasTAFE, TCCI and others providing good opportunities for networking. We also met with several federal and state politicians as part of our normal operations.

Our Executive this year has been instrumental in our success, and I thank them for their time and efforts. Justin McErlain has stood down from the secretary role to concentrate on projects within his business – exciting times for him. It is impossible to state his contribution to our organisation over the last 5-6 years. He has been inspirational with his high-tech knowledge and creativeness and has helped transform us into a recognised leader in the chamber movement.

I thank all our sponsors and look forward to another bright year for 2025/26.

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PLATINUM MEMBERS			
			
Powering the North West Coast			
GOLD MEMBERS		SILVER MEMBERS	
			
			
			
			
BRONZE MEMBERS			
			
			